



**TOWN OF GRAFTON**  
MASSACHUSETTS  
01519  
**PLANNING DEPARTMENT**

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**Date:** August 7, 2015  
**To:** Planning Board  
**From:** Joe Laydon, Town Planner   
**Re:** Gristmill Village - Town Planner Comments on road length waiver

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At the Board's last hearing regarding Gristmill Village, there was discussion regarding the timing of a vote on the waiver. While there is no written policy that prevents such a discussion to occur in the public hearing, I anticipate the Board will consider the waiver request in its deliberation session. The purpose of this memorandum is to provide my opinion and recommendation for the waiver of roadway length so that it may be considered during the Board's deliberation.

In the Board's 2014 decision for Gristmill Village, the Board voted to grant a waiver from the Section 4.1.3.6 of the Subdivision Rules and Regulations requiring a minimum of 600 feet for the interval of adjacent streets. The Board's decision denied waivers for the maximum length of a dead end street. The Board referenced Section 4.1.6.3 of the Subdivision Rules and Regulations, which states the following:

*"In the unusual event that topography or other site conditions justify a dead end street longer than five hundred feet (500'), and where there is a substantial public or conservation benefit to be achieved, the Planning Board may relax these standards. Any waiver request regarding this provision shall require the Board to specify the particular public and/or conservation benefit to be realized..."*

The Board stated within its decision that the Applicant "failed to adequately demonstrate that alternative layouts could be developed to justify the waiver request." The Board required an alternative layout design to be submitted with the application for definitive subdivision approval. Information was submitted per the Board's request and it was determined that the lot count for the subdivision would be reduced from 10 to 8 lots. During the hearing on July 13, 2015, the Applicant stated that the lot count has been reduced the greatest extent possible and any further reductions would make the development unprofitable.

In considering Section 4.1.3.6, I am of the opinion that there is the potential for a conservation benefit to be realized with the approval of the requested waiver if the Applicant were to place a deed restriction on the rear portion of lots 7, 8, 9, and 10.

During the Major Residential Special Permit process for Gristmill Village, I voiced my support for the flexible development plan. The preservation of habitat and forest land, even if there were no active use

of the open space, has a public benefit. With the approval of the conventional subdivision plan, the potential for lots to be cleared exists and since three of the 10 lots contain wetlands, there is the potential for significant impacts to wetlands and existing habitat.

I am recommending to the Applicant and the Board that the rear portions of lots 7 through 10 be protected through a "no disturb" deed restriction to protect this back land. With the rear portions of these lots protected by a deed restriction, I believe that there is an additional public benefit that is realized and would support the waiver request to extend the road from 500 feet to the proposed 599 feet in length.

Thank you.